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President's Forum

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PRESIDENT'S FORUM



THESE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL VERY BUSY MONTHS since I was installed as the President of the Naval War College. To be serving in a position once held by Admirals Alfred Thayer Mahan, Raymond Spruance, and Stansfield Turner (among others) is very humbling but also exciting. I return to the College at a time when the need for military leaders able to think critically and shape the future has never been greater. Because the Naval War College is perhaps the finest professional military education institution in the world, I see the

College playing an increasingly important role in preparing our students to assume leadership roles in the uniformed services, in government agencies in the national security arena, and in friendly and allied nations around the world.

There have been a number of changes here since I was a student over a decade ago, but the essence and the thrust of the College's education are the same. The demanding program still consists of four core elements: Strategy and Policy, National Security Decision Making, Joint Military Operations, and a robust and varied electives program. Likewise, our research, analysis, and gaming efforts remain focused on helping the Chief of Naval Operations to define the future Navy. We seek and receive a great deal of feedback about our programs and efforts from our accrediting bodies, our Board of Advisors, uniformed and civilian leaders within the Department of Defense, and our growing population of alumni. All indications are that we have the basics about right! But while the fundamental elements of our mission as the Navy's intermediate and senior-level professional military education institution are in place, the context within which we must accomplish our work continues to evolve rapidly.

Taken together, the political, economic, and technological developments in the international security environment represent a genuine sea change in the way we think about, shape, plan, and employ our naval forces. Over the College's long history, I suspect, every president, faculty, and student body has sought to grasp the significance of the changes around them. I am convinced, however, that the *scope* and *pace* of change today are extraordinary. Thus, the challenges to our College community—faculty, staff, students, and alumni—are as great as

they have ever been over the 120 years of the institution's existence. New strategic and operational challenges to our nation's security have emerged that demand bold, innovative approaches. The security threats confronting the United States and its allies are unconventional, created by an array of wily foes empowered by advanced technology. Many of the time-honored rules for dealing with other nations do not apply when dealing with nonstate actors such as international terrorist groups, pirates, and organized-crime syndicates.

Along with these asymmetric threats come the political perils of being the world's lone superpower and a demand to nurture better our relationship with friends and allies as we also compete for hearts and minds throughout the world. We must find ways to apply the nation's seapower and military might in greater concert with our diplomatic and informational instruments of power. As Walter Russell Mead said in *Power, Terror, Peace and War*, "We are going to have to reinvent some of the ways we think about power and influence."

In the months and years ahead, the College must act as a prudent mariner, reacting appropriately and decisively to changes in the international security environment. We will play a pivotal role in dealing with the emerging challenges of this new century. As a first step, we have begun a far-reaching internal analysis of all of our resident and nonresident professional military education programs and a thorough review of all our research, analysis, and gaming initiatives. We cannot yet know what these reviews will yield, but the fundamental measures of effectiveness for our efforts are clear: our academic programs and research products must remain relevant and focused on key issues of the day; and our case studies, war games, and exercises must address the issues of transformation, change management, risk analysis, the evolving international security environment, and the defeat of terrorism. Finally, our students must leave here prepared to play immediately key roles in the joint command and control architecture.

The continued interest of our Congress and recent policies established by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and by our CNO are unmistakable votes of trust and confidence in what we are doing at the Naval War College. Together, they underscore as well the *expectation* that the College will be a source of thoughtful answers in a world of tough questions. Many of the issues under debate relate to the increasing recognition of the unique value and capabilities of naval forces in a world of decreasing overseas bases and less-assured access. Naval forces have emerged as a key element of the joint future in the form of the *joint sea base* and other evolving concepts. With the objective of ensuring a range of flexible responses to the president and commander in chief, we must apply the College's considerable intellectual capital and operational expertise to exploiting capabilities unique and inherent in naval modes of operation.

We have a truly extraordinary advantage here in Newport to meet our nation's and our Navy's expectations.

- A highly capable and motivated faculty and student body.
- A commitment to research and analysis absent parochial interests.
- Complete naval "ownership"—we are "inside the lifelines."
- A close and complementary relationship with the Navy Warfare Development Command and the CNO's Strategic Studies Group here in Newport and the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California.

In light of the factors outlined in the previous paragraphs, we have identified our three top goals for this flagship institution:

The first is to ensure that all our professional military education programs remain current, rigorous, relevant, and accessible to the maximum number of students. This requires full-time resident programs that are skillfully crafted to focus on the issues most critical to future leaders, and nonresident programs tailored to the needs of this very diverse student body. We need to educate our officers so they are competent for the age, relevant to the times, and prepared to help shape the future.

The second is to ensure that our research, analysis, and gaming efforts support the needs of the fleet, the combatant commanders, and the Chief of Naval Operations. The Naval War College is a unique asset that "lives outside the beltway" and "thinks outside the box." We need to focus on delivering analytical products that matter to our service and impact key decisions.

The third is to develop and provide the education necessary for officers to operate and lead effectively and efficiently in joint maritime command and staff positions, on combatant commander staffs, and in joint task forces. There is no question that virtually all military operations in the future will be accomplished with joint and multinational forces, led by officers from all services who are first and foremost experts in their own warfare community. But these officers must also be educated and acculturated to work in a joint, interagency, and multinational environment, where the pace and complexities of modern combat operations do not permit the luxury of on-the-job-training—naval officers must arrive *ready to fight*. The Naval War College must become the educational center of excellence for joint command and control in the maritime domain.

In the final analysis, with regard to our educational responsibility, I want to assure you that the College continues to educate our students effectively in joint warfare from a *maritime perspective*. We have a long and proud heritage as the intellectual center of the Navy, and we want to ensure that we focus on the strategic and operational challenges in the maritime domain while being actively

involved in developing naval strategy for the future. With regard to our research, analysis, and gaming function, we must continue to bring our unique advantages to bear on projects of significant importance to our regional commanders, our fleet and numbered fleet commanders, the Navy Staff, and the CNO. Our criterion for success is insight into military conflict of such accuracy and penetration that current and future leaders can say of their own circumstances, as did Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz at the end of World War II, “The war with Japan had been re-enacted in the game rooms at the War College by so many people, and in so many different ways, [with the exception of kamikaze tactics] nothing that happened during the war was a surprise.”

I will keep you informed as we conduct our internal reviews and as we sharpen the focus of our activity and accelerate our advantages. I am thrilled to be aboard, to be associated with this nation’s preeminent national security faculty, and to be on the bridge at such a vital moment for our College and the Navy. I am certain we are up to the task.

J. L. SHUFORD

Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy
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